

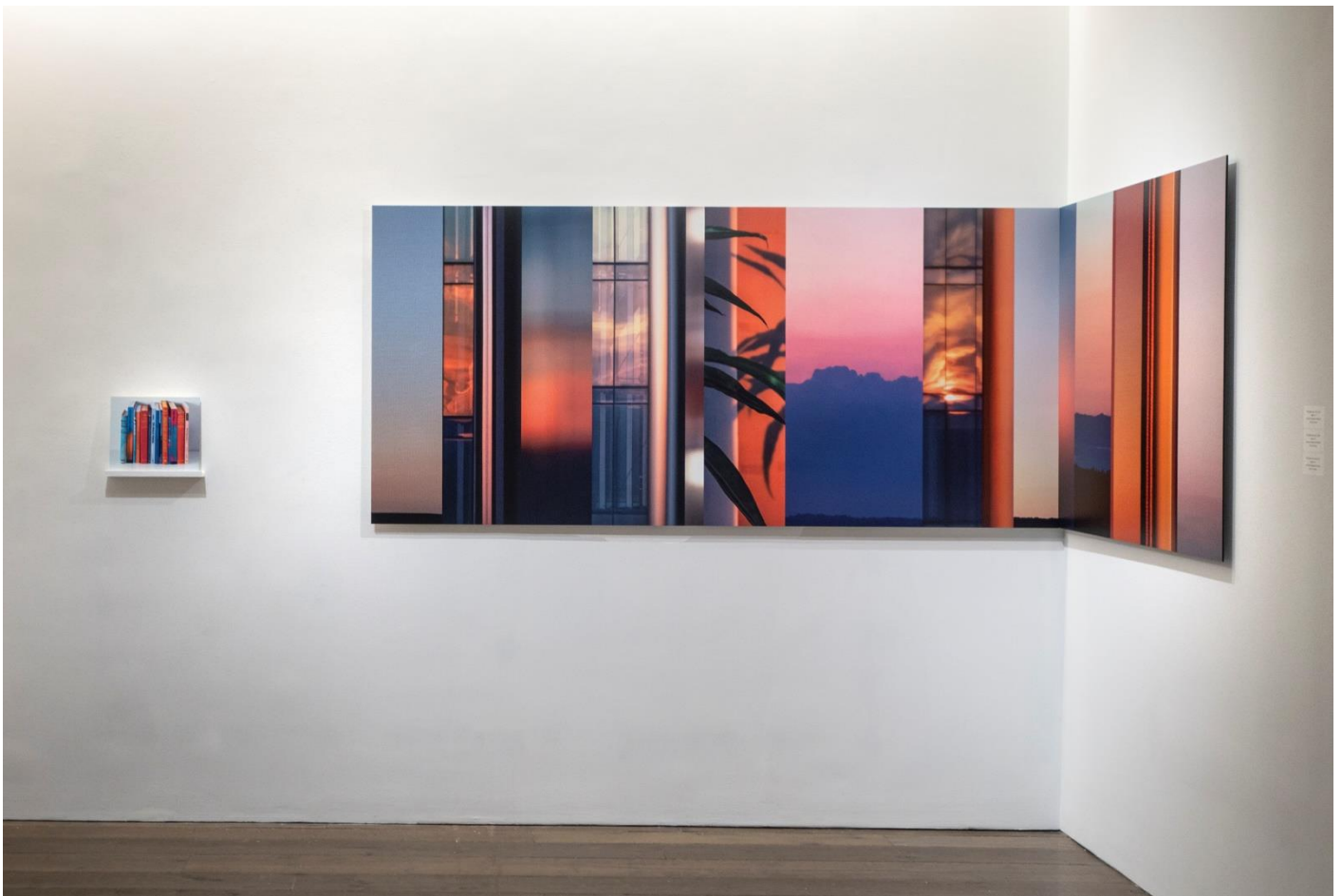
BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

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MAGAZINE

EILEEN NEFF – *THE WINDOWS* EXHIBITION

By Bobbi Booker / November 19, 2021

Photographer Eileen Neff presents The Windows, a photographic installation exhibition at the Bridgette Mayer Gallery.



Installation view of *The Golden Hour, Part 1; The Golden Hour, Part 2; The Golden Hour, Part 3; and Bird Books among Others.*

There was no doubt I was at the right place as I heard the energetic murmur. You'll always find a fascinating rotation of contemporary paintings, sculptures, and photographs at the Bridgette Mayer Gallery, which measures 3,000 square feet. On display was the fascinating installation work of photographer Eileen Neff, with viewers learning about her life and admiring her work.

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The Windows provides viewers a peek into a reimagined world of their own creation. All of the photographs, each a work of art in itself, were sparse enough for the imagination to take flight.



It is fitting that the artist's statement is displayed between the Gallery's two Walnut Street windows that look out onto Washington Square Park. Neff explained: "Most of my work includes the landscape as a primary element of the photographic constructions I create. As much as the landscape, I love engaging the conventions of seeing and picturing as a source of syntactical invention. The works move freely between the apparent ordinariness of a recognizable image and sheer abstraction, sometimes appearing closer to a painting's pictorial strategies than what we expect from photography. Having formally studied painting before photography, and poetry before painting, I consider the ideas and boundaries between disciplines to be more fluid than not. With that said, I'd like my photographs to quicken one's sense of attention and presence, the way sculpture can.

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A graduate of Philadelphia College of Art and Tyler School of Art's MFA program, Eileen Neff studied literature and painting at Temple University before beginning her work with photo-based images and photo/installations in 1981. While the historical and contemporary notions of picturing the natural and constructed world inspire Neff's work, her practice also includes an investigation of studio practice as a source. As a result of her multi-disciplinary background, Eileen Neff blurs the line between nature and art, considering forms display and presentation within exhibition sites as integral elements of her inquiry. The artist is especially excited to show her work at Bridgette Mayer Gallery once again because she feels it completes itself by being exhibited in a gallery environment.

In a conversation about her exhibition and recent works, Neff noted: "I've always been aware of how gifted I am by the windows of my studio/apartment, but never more so than this last year and a half of necessary seclusion. And the particular inspiration of the Summer Solstice, when the setting sun casts its deepening light on my eastern walls, once again turned this annual visit into a generative source of work. With my back to the windows, I also reconsidered what was already hanging on my walls, my printed-to-scale taped together test prints for work I was planning for this year's New Grit: Art & Philly Now exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; in this new, sequestered world, the taped images, which I had long been living with and which had always been of interest to me, now held my attention in a heightened way. And my ongoing practice of photographing the Period Room windows at the PMA, (represented by Border Crossing in New Grit), also makes an appearance here, as I reproduced another museum window and subjected it to the seasonal light across my studio walls, conflating the museum experience with that of the studio, and ultimately retelling its story in the gallery."

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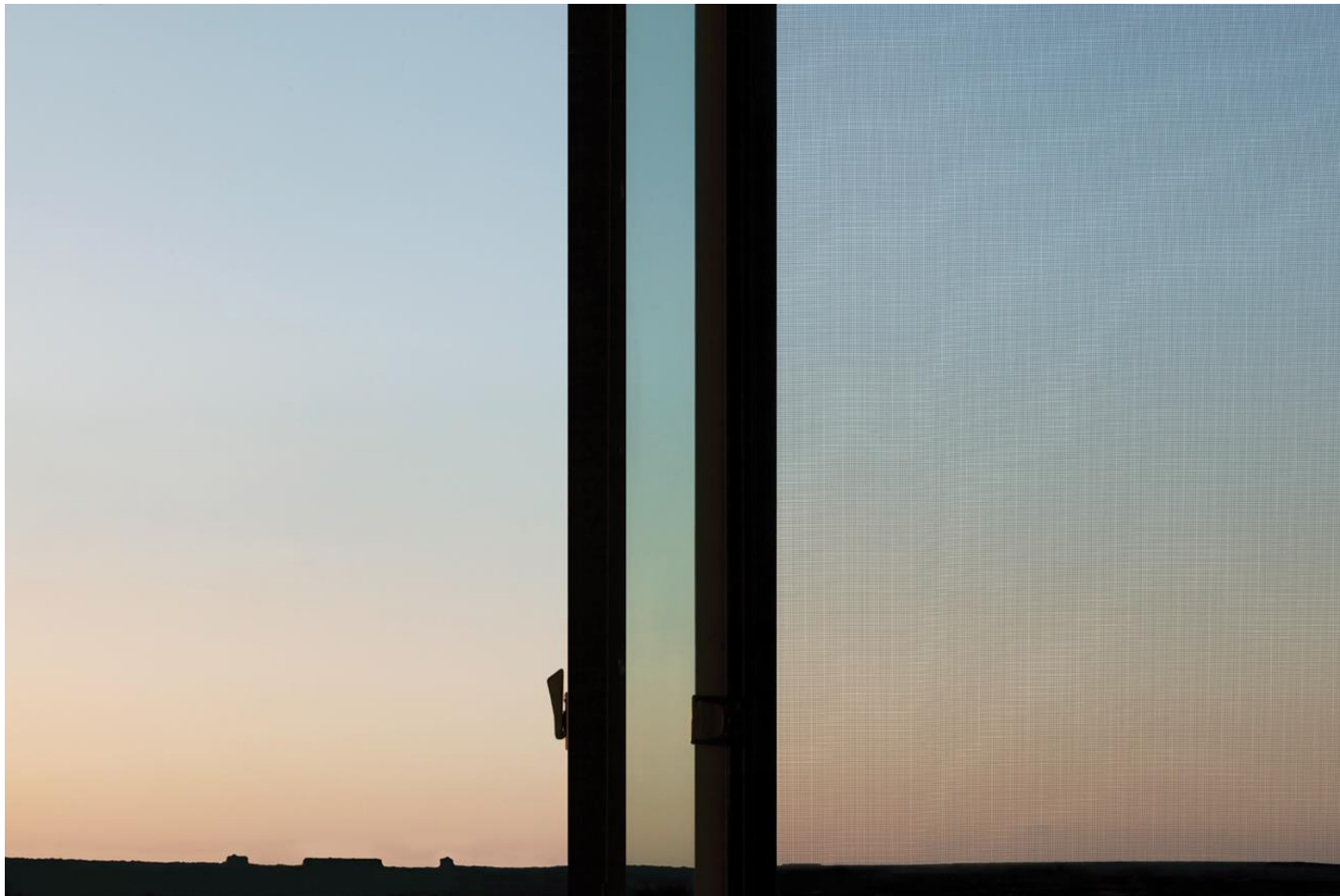
Art photographer Eileen Neff speaking with guests.

Besides the Bridgette Mayer Gallery, Neff's work has been exhibited at the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia; the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia. There have been many group exhibitions featuring her work, including at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Michener Art Museum, the Fabric Workshop and Museum, and Wave Hill. Among the institutions that own Neff's work are the Hood Museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Her awards include a John S. Guggenheim Fellowship in Photography, a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, as well as a National Endowment for the Arts grant. Currently, she is a Resident Critic at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

The busy and exciting reception drew over two dozen guests and was in full swing as the artist walked through the Gallery with her walking stick and observed the exhibition through the eyes of others.

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Waving Goodbye

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Moon in a Chair

“In preparation for this November’s outing, several years of work not yet exhibited in the gallery wanted to come forward, and I’ve selected a few to accompany the work encouraged by my windows,” shared Eileen Neff. “While under their spell, I was still feeling close to what was out of sight – the landscapes remembered – and these memories and experiences were compounded for this exhibition, with my concentrated studio time leading the way.”

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Installation view of *Placeholder* and *Cloud Time*.

The Bridgette Mayer Gallery, located on the first floor of 709 Walnut Street, is open to the public. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 10:00am – 5:00pm.

Full article: <https://www.dosagemagazine.com/eileen-neff-the-windows-exhibition/>